

Message Text

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ACTION ORM-02

INFO OCT-01 AF-10 NEA-10 ISO-00 DHA-02 SCA-01 AID-05
TRSE-00 OMB-01 ABF-01 IGA-02 EB-07 PM-04 NSC-05
SP-02 SS-15 CIAE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 L-03 /078 W
-----091152Z 093968 /50

R 071100Z MAY 77
FM AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0000
AMEMBASSY ALGIERS
AMEMBASSY RABAT
USMISSION USUN GENEVA

C O N F I D E N T I A L NOUAKCHOTT 1067

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: SREF
SUBJECT: DEPT. CONSIDERING CONTRIBUTION IN RESPONSE TO UNHCR
APPEALS FOR SAHARAN REFUGEES

REF: (A) STATE 98562, (B) NOUAKCHOTT 200, (C) RABAT 2399

SUMMARY: WHILE MAURITANIAN OFFICIALS RECOGNIZE AND APPLAUD
RECENT STATEMENTS BY CARTER ADMINISTRATION ON HUMAN RIGHTS,
WE BELIEVE MAURITANIANS WOULD REACT ADVERSELY AT THIS TIME,
BOTH PUBLICLY AND PRIVATELY, TO ANY USG ASSISTANCE TO REFUGEE
CAMPS IN SOUTHERN ALERIA. IMPACT OF MAY 1 ZOUEATE ATTACK HAS
MADE MAURITANIANS PARTICULARLY SENSITIVE TO ANY ACTION THAT
WOULD APPEAR TO ASSIST POLISARIO. END SUMMARY.

1. ON EVE OF HIS DEPARTURE FOR ABIDJAN CHIEFS OF MISSION CON-
FERENCE, AMBASSADOR TOOK OPPORTUNITY OF MAY 5 CALL ON MOH-
AMED OULD SIDI ALY, SENIOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OFFICIAL, TO DISCUSS
INFORMALLY UNHCR ASSISTANCE TO SAHARAN REFUGEES. HE MENTIONED
JANUARY 1977 VISIT OF PRINCE AGA KHAN (REF B), NOTED THAT UNIRR
WAS APPARENTLY HAVING SOME DIFFICULTIES IN FINANCING SAHARA
RELIEF PROGRAM AND INQUIRED AS TO MAURITANIAN VIEWS OF UNHCR
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EFFORT IN CASE ISSUE AROSE. GIRM OFFICIAL NOTED THAT WHLE
MAURITANIANS UNDERSTOOD HUMANITARIAN ELEMENTS OF UNHCR PROGRAM,
THEY HAD POINTED OUT TO PRINCE DURING HIS JANUARY VISIT THAT
THERE WAS A FINE LINE BETWEEN HUMANITARIAN ACTIONS AND
POLITICS AND HAD URGED PRINCE TO INSTITUTE CONTROLS OVER
UNHCR PROGRAM TO AVOID CROSSING LINE INTO POLITICAL ARENA,
AS HAD BEEN DONE IN PAST. OFFICIAL NOTED THAT AS RESULT

OF THESE DISCUSSIONS, PRINCE BETTER UNDERSTOOD GIRM POSITION AND HAD AGREED TO INSTITUTE CONTROLS.

2. OFFICAL NOTED THAT ESSENTIAL ELEMENT OF GIRM POLICY TOWARD INHABITANTS OF SOUTHERN ALGERIAN REFUGEE CAMPS WAS THAT THE LARGE MAJORITY OF THESE "REFUGEES" WERE ALGERIAN NATIONALS, NOT SAHARANS. IN ADDITION, THE MINORITY THAT MAY IN FACT BE TRUE SAHARANS WERE NOT "REFUGEES" SINCE THEY HAD BEEN INVITED TO RETURN TO MOROCCO AND MAURITANIA WITH GUARANTEES THAT THEY WOULD BE REINTEGRATED WITHOUT RECRIMINATIONS INTO THEIR SOCIETIES. ACCORDINGLY, RESPONSIBILITY FOR INSURING HEALTH AND WELFARE OF THESE "REFUGEES" FALLS UPON THE ALGERIAN GOVERNMENT AND NOT UNHCR AND THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY.

3. SIDI ALY, WHO IS BOTH MFA DIRECTOR OF POLITICAL AFFAIRS AND ONE OF THE TWO MFA OFFICIALS WHO HAS THE COMPLETE CONFIDENCE OF FOREIGN MINISTER HAMDI MOUKNASS, NOTED THAT HE PERSONALLY FELT THAT THIS WAS NEITHER THE TIME FOR AN APPEAL, NOR FOR FAVORABLE CONSIDERATION OF SUCH AN APPEAL BY THE USG. HE NOTED THAT WHILE GIRM APPLAUDS CARTER ADMINISTRATION'S STRONG INTEREST IN HUMAN RIGHTS, THE MILITARY EVENTS OF THE LAST WEEK HAVE CAUSED DEEP CONCERN AMONG MAURITANIANS AND ANY POSITIVE USG RESPONSE TO A UNHCR APPEAL FOR ASSISTANCE FOR THE "REFUGEES" IN SOUTHERN ALGERIA, EVEN ON HUMANITARIAN GROUNDS, WOULD UNDOUBTEDLY BE VIEWED AS SUPPORT FOR MAURITANIA'S ENEMIES. PERHAPS WHEN PRESSURES ON MAURITANIA ARE LESS INTENSE, ANY SUCH ACTION WOULD BE MORE EASILY UNDERSTOOD.

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IN CLOSING, SIDI ALY EXPRESSED APPRECIATION THAT HIS VIEWS HAD BEEN SOUGHT AND THAT HE HAD BEEN GIVEN OPPORTUNITY TO CLARIFY THE GIRM VIEWPOINT ON THIS SUBJECT.

2. COMMENT: EMBOFFS HAVE NOTED THAT THE SUCCESSFUL ATTACK ON ZOUERATE LAST WEEKEND HAS HAD A SIGNIFICANT IMPACT UPON MAURITANIANS AND FOREIGNERS RESIDENT IN NOUAKCHOTT. THERE IS WIDESPREAD TALK AMONG BOTH GROUPS ABOUT THE INABILITY OF THE GIRM FORCES TO EITHER DEFEND ZOUERATE OR RESPOND MILITARILY TO THE ATTACK. WHEREAS PERHAPS TWO WEEKS AGO MAURITANIANS MIGHT HAVE MORE EASILY SHOWN CONCERN FOR THE HUMANITARIAN NEEDS OF THE MINORITY OF "REFUGEES" WHO ARE THEIR ETHNIC AND TRIBAL BROTHERS AND THUS BEEN MORE SYMPATHETIC TO UNHCR HUMANITARIAN EFFORTS, TODAY MOST MAURITANIANS WOULD CONSIDER USG ASSISTANCE AS LENDING SUPPORT TO THEIR ENEMIES. SHOULD USG DECIDE TO SUPPORT UNHCR EFFORT, WE HOPE LOWEST USG PROFILE IS MAINTAINED.

FARLEY

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